

Ways and Means Health Subcommittee Ranking Member Pete Stark (D-CA) raised questions today about the President's Medicare principles and proposed prescription drug discount program. "These principles are all hat and no cattle," Stark said. "They raise more questions than they answer, and merely hint at the trouble ahead for current and future Medicare beneficiaries."

Stark asked, "Is he willing to guarantee benefits at least as good as those offered today to current and future beneficiaries for the foreseeable future? Is he willing to show the same commitment to America's Medicare beneficiaries as he has shown to the wealthy Americans who benefited from the tax cuts? Is he willing to show the same commitment to Medicare beneficiaries as the Department of Defense?"

The only policy unveiled by the President last week is the creation of a new Medicare-funded campaign to promote existing drug discount cards. "The Bush discount card is a placebo at best. At worst, it may well be a favor to the industry that would allow plans which might participate in a Medicare benefit (if one is ever enacted) to establish themselves with Medicare beneficiaries," said Stark. "I intend to watch this new program carefully, since it's clear the Administration won't be doing so."